Public Opinion and the Media

To what extent do the media influence your political views?

S P E A K I N G  o f  P o l i t i c s

As you complete the Reading Notes, use these terms in your answers:

- public opinion
- political socialization
- opinion poll
- margin of error

mass media
spin
media bias
negative campaigning

P R E V I E W

Analyze Adlai Stevenson’s 1952 campaign poster, shown at the beginning of Chapter 9, and record responses to these questions:

- What details do you see?
- According to the poster, why should people vote for Stevenson?
- To whom is this poster designed to appeal?
- Do you think such a poster could actually influence people’s views in an election?
- What other kinds of political media messages have you been exposed to? Did they have any influence on your political views?

R E A D I N G  N O T E S

After you read each section, answer the corresponding questions in your notebook.

Section 9.2

1. List six forces that shape political socialization. Rank them in order from 1 (most influence on my political socialization) to 6 (least influence). For the top two items on your list, briefly explain why they have influenced your political socialization.

2. Create a simple diagram or illustration to represent each of the three ways that public opinion is shaped. Label each illustration.

3. Why is public opinion important in a democracy?

Section 9.3

1. Explain the difference between straw polls and the scientific sampling process.

2. Create a simple flowchart to show the steps of the polling process. Begin with the sentence shown below.

Identify the target population to be surveyed.

3. Create a symbol to represent each of these types of polls: benchmark polls, tracking polls, exit polls, and push polls. Then write one or two sentences explaining whether you think each type of poll should be used in political campaigns.

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Section 9.4
1. Create a simple T-chart. In the first column, list at least three traditional media sources. In the second column, list at least five forms of “new” media. Check off all the forms of media that you have seen or used. Below your chart, identify at least two pros and one con of the new media.
2. What is the role of a free press in a democracy?
3. Describe two ways in which public officials can attract and shape media coverage.
4. Are the media biased? Explain your answer.

Section 9.5
How important do you think a candidate’s image is during a political campaign? Use at least two of these terms in your answer: media consultant, issue ad, image ad, photo op, soap opera story, mudslinging.

PROCESSING
Write a paragraph in response to each question.
1. Are campaign commercials a good source of information about candidates? Why or why not?
2. How much influence do you think political advertising has on voters during elections? Why?